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A Proposed Schema for the Conditions of Creativity in Fine Art Studio Practice

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Abstract

Drawing from creativity and art research, this paper proposes a schema for the conditions for creativity in fine art studio practice. Discussion focuses on how the triad of creative person, artmaking process, and artwork is constructed, and the situating of this creative triad within an enabling environment, which on a structural level includes the curriculum, and on a cultural and agential level involves teaching and learning relationships. An emphasis is placed on affective concerns, particularly the role of uncertainty as an important part of the art student's learning experience.

Introduction

Although recent trends in creativity research may be almost four decades along, because of the diversity of political interests, foci and domain-specific approaches, it is perhaps appropriate that no dominant methodological approach has emerged (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). And, as research into the hidden curriculum has revealed, it is not always possible to determine the conditions for learning. Whilst a number of debates circle around which conditions help or hinder creativity (Burnard, 2007), as with so much theorising, this cannot be universally claimed but rather explored by considering the particular domain in question (Csikszentmihalyi 1999), as the effect of context on student approaches to learning has been widely demonstrated (Solomonides & Reid, 2012).

In previous research I emphasized particular areas of teaching and learning interactions (Belluigi, 2010), which I have since realised may have focused too exclusively on teacher- and curriculum-directed possibilities for creating conditions for the creative process. In a bid to broaden and deepen my own research into creativity within the specificity of fine art studio practice, I have constructed a schema (Figure 1) that I present in this paper. This schema may be of interest to those looking at the interplay between creativity and education, and of benefit to those within the creative arts or studio teaching and learning contexts. I will firstly briefly describe the schema itself, before looking more closely at the thinking that informed the inclusion and interplay of the different components. In Part I, I discuss the creative triad and in the second part look at the environment in which it is situated and interacts. I will then focus my discussion on a particular concern with the affect in this domain.

A schema for the conditions for creativity

The schema I propose here represents different aspects and influences, which when combined create certain conditions. My intention is to indicate and understand their complex interplay for the purposes of informing teaching and learning interactions and research in fine art studio practice, rather than conclusively quantifying their interaction. At the centre of the schema is situated a triad: the person's sense of self and identity as the "author" (what I've termed "the artist-student"); the process (termed "the artmaking process"); and at the creative outcome or product (termed "the artwork"). This recognition of the potential for each aspect of creativity comes from the argument that significant investment is required by all three aspects for the learning experience to be genuinely creative (Spendlove, 2007).¹ It also recognises that "the

¹ I have deviated from Spendlove's (2007) terminology of "person", "process" and "product" to directly situate this schema within the fine art studio practice domain, as well as to avoid such terminology as "product" which

development of meanings and interpretations is inseparable from material processes and production” (Danvers, 2003, p. 52), rather than preceding or determining them. As I expand in this paper, the term “conditions” is indicative of a larger “space” within which the person, process and product triad is situated. Under this umbrella term is included the environment, structurally in terms of the curriculum and assessment (that experienced, rather than espoused), and culturally and agentially in terms of relationships and roles between teacher, student and his/her peers, and affective aspects of artmaking.

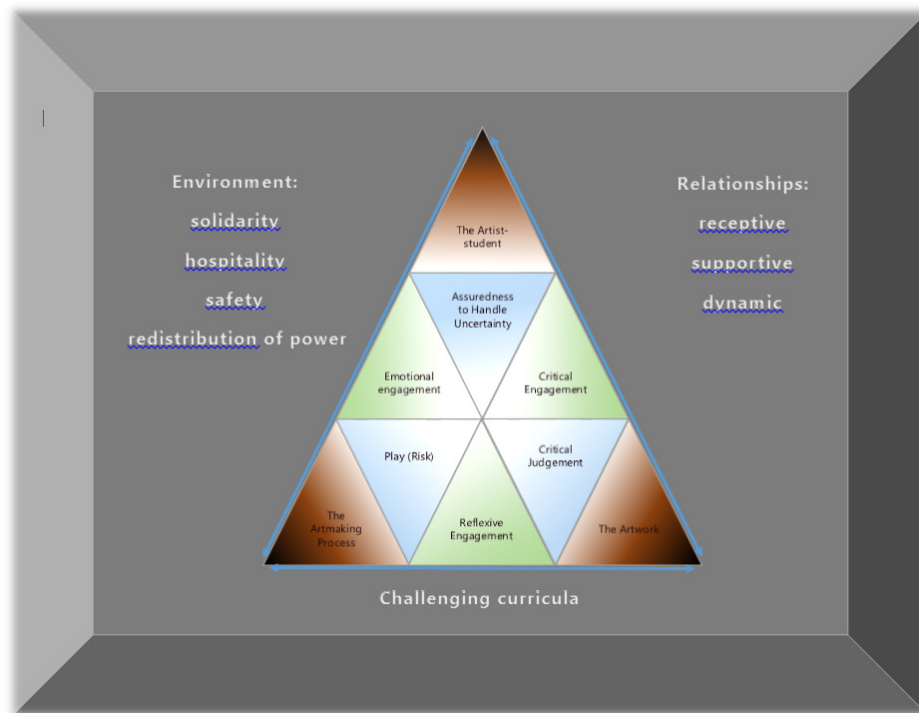


Figure 1. A schema for the conditions for creativity in fine art studio practice

My construction of this schema and my decision to situate the triad within a larger environment is informed by a holistic understanding of creativity. This is in part informed by the systems approach of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990a, 1990b, 1996, 1999), which assumes

carries with it certain intentionalist associations. I believe that artmaking involves more complex interplays than the assertion of the self as author, with the process and the product in some respects having their own distinct alterity, albeit that they are relationally constructed. In this I am suggesting that the process and product is neither determined nor autonomous of the artist, but rather than each aspect of the triad are reflexively intertwined, in often non-linear ways.

that creativity is relational as well as situated – in that it comes from a person’s cognitive and affective sources, but also has to do with an outcome that is valued as creative by those within that specific domain (Sullivan, 2007). By including consideration of the creative outcome, the focus of creativity is broadened from the person or the process to the product, and its reception and impact within the public domain. Authorship, textuality and readership are acknowledged within such a systems approach, with the creative person seen as the author of the creative outcome and central to the creative process, while the creative product is subject to recognition for the domain’s interpretative community. While one aspect of this is to do with the consensus of the particular interpretative community, another relates to the referential influence of knowledge and discourses of the particular field. Such a domain-specific conception of creativity holds that subject matter knowledge is of primary concern to the teaching process (Feldman & Benjamin, 2006). And, unlike Romantic models of creativity, formal learning is recognised, requiring that the individual utilises critical analysis to draw from knowledge in a specific domain, including texts/ works etc, in addition to its discourses, whether theoretical, philosophical, so as to position the creative work (Cowdroy & Williams, 2007).

Part I. The Creativity Triad

The Artist-Student

Creativity relates to the person’s sense of self, in terms of his/her identity formation as a “student” and future artist. In the schema, this area is represented as the top apex of the triad, connected directly to assuredness to handle uncertainty, emotional and critical engagement.

Within education the most salient factors, believed to play a substantial role in the enablement or containment of creativity, are the personality traits of the learner and their prior knowledge (Dineen & Collins, 2005). This is underpinned by psychological approaches which characterize the creative person as a “type” with certain predispositions (Amabile, 1996). Such notions construct “the self” as fixed. Rather postmodern notions of people as fluid and inter-relational acknowledge how conditions enable or constrain the development of such abilities and dispositions. By acknowledging the person’s situatedness and interrelatedness in a specific context, one may recognize how s/he is discursively positioned, enabled or constrained, and that this may have an impact on the approaches to learning s/he adopts.

Creative dispositions include using broad rather than narrow categories: having an appreciation for different ideas; disrupting typical mind sets; keeping options open and suspending judgment; and accessing both cognitive and so-called intuitive or affective domains (Dineen, Samuel, & Livesey, 2005). In addition, links have been made between confidence and creative performance when the person engages with heuristic tasks (Mieg,

Bedenk, Braun, & Neyer, 2012). Whilst this is seen by some as an intrinsic issue of self-confidence, I would concur with those who argue that often conditions act to develop emotional surety to cope with uncertainty in artmaking (Edström, 2008a; Solomonides & Reid, 2009). Student engagement, the conception of quality learning which informs this schema, acknowledges the impact of affective aspects on creativity, learning and the person's sense of self. Conditions that are favorable help develop the emotional capacities that enable students to engage creatively (Austerlitz & James, 2008; Spendlove, 2007).

Solomonides and Reid (2009) emphasize the importance of student's confidence, happiness, imagination and self-knowledge. For them, "a Sense of Being" is *the* core element of creativity as it mediates the ways in which students engage with various aspects of their learning, from the practical aspects of artmaking; to their identities within the professional community of practice; to the situated and relational contextual nature of their studies and discourses; and lastly, to how they engage with transformative learning. A student's image or perception of his/herself (Kluger & de Nisi, 1996), and his/her interpretation or understanding of the role of "student", can substantially impact the approach to learning adopted by the individual (Blair, 2007). In creative arts fields, a student's self-concept is often strongly intertwined with their studies, with highly personal work submitted for assessment, involving body, mind, and spirit (Harwood, 2007). Whilst I am not suggesting a Romantic notion of the artist-student as emotional, what the schema attempts to acknowledge is the critical impact of emotions and feelings on our sense of self and processes of adult learning (Dirkx, 2001).

Care should be taken not to construct the creative person as autonomous, or consider him/her in isolation. Emotional investment is required not only *by* the student but also in terms of investment *in* the student (Spendlove, 2007). One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through discerning, meaningful and emotionally engaging contexts being facilitated within the curriculum (Spendlove, 2007), another through the relationship with and modelling by the supervisor (Ochsner, 2000), aspects of the environment discussed later in this paper.

The Artmaking Process

In the schema, the potentially creative process is represented at the left of the triad, connected directly to the areas of play, emotional engagement and challenging contexts. My discussion of the creative process begins with philosophical and psychological conceptions of 'process', so as to establish a wider context for the conception that informs this schema.

Philosophical constructions most influential to constructions of the creative process in the "West" suggest differing understandings of the role of process in terms of the artist and artwork (see Gaut & Livingston, 2003). Plato places inspiration, as a creative impulse from

the divine to the awaiting, passive artist, as central to the creative process. This conception of creativity as mysterious was key for the Romantics, and is to some extents echoed in Freudian notions of the unconscious. Whilst Plato and Kant constructed the artist in a passive role to the creative process that was somewhat devoid of authorship, in other conceptions, for example Collingwood's (1938) notion, imagination is linked to creativity in a manner which evolves from expression through conscious evaluation or critical control. Beardsley (1965) distinguishes the finalistic or teleological theory from the propulsive theory of the creative process, preferring the latter conception where the "incept" (original idea or inspiration) affects the development of the artwork in a causal rather than teleological manner.

In the main, psychological approaches place more importance on the imaginative processes of conceptualization and schematization than the execution of the craft or technique, or the final product (Cowdroy & de Graaff, 2005). This is underpinned by an assumption which differs fundamentally from those philosophical conceptions outlined above - that creativity is produced from general psychological mechanisms, and therefore these can be explained theoretically. Dominant psychological conceptions characterise the creative process as four overlapping processes, preparation, incubation, illumination and verification (Dineen & Collins, 2005; Gaut & Livingston, 2003). Many of us who have worked with artmaking would object to such linear constructions of the creative process and the assumed hierarchy between content and form or theory and practice. However some of those who expound such constructions acknowledge that these four demarcations are artificial and "ideal-typical" for research purposes and that, because the creative process is complex and variable, in actuality such stages overlap and blend (Gaut & Livingston, 2003). An aspect that is acknowledged within psychological approaches, to which I concur, is that external and internal factors can stimulate or inhibit creative thinking throughout the process (Dineen & Collins, 2005).

A more tentative proposal is that of the five "creativity skills", originality, fluency, abstracting, elaboration and openness, proposed by Torrance and Ball (1984). "Originality" has to do with cognitive leaps that deviate in unusual ways from the commonsensical or commonplace; "fluency" relates to a suspension of prior judgment to arrive at different ways of addressing the project or problem; "abstracting" involves selection from and organising appropriate solutions into a plan; "elaboration" is about the detailed approaches, improvements and modifications made on the work itself; and "openness" suggests maintaining spaces for change and resistance to premature closure. Whilst many of these skills can be made to fit the four stages of psychological conceptions of the creative process mentioned above, the allowance for change, adaptability and resistance to closure can be associated with what may seem more postmodern notions of creative processes. The importance given to the "doing" or "making" aspects of the process, rather than only the

cognitive aspects, also suggest ideas similar to those circulating amongst artmakers and studio educators themselves.

In light of studies of specific individuals' artmaking processes, some psychologists argue that there cannot be one uniform or mechanistic process to account for the creative process (Gaut & Livingston, 2003). For the purposes of educating future artists, a more useful differentiation may be the continuum between what Freeman (2006) calls "weak" and "strong" acts of creativity. When the student only solves the problem to which s/he was directed it is seen as "weak", whereas a "strong" act is when the student further problematises the subject at hand, opening it up to multiple possibilities, utilising convergent and divergent thinking. To some extents this echoes Boden's (1994) argument that for creativity to be radical there must be some overturning, revolution or rupture of established rules.

In fine art, the focus on process is reiterated by the community of practice but not necessarily within academia. Much discussion around contemporary art questions the value of the art object itself, extending the notion of "art-as-object" to include "process-as-practice" and "theory-as-practice" (Sullivan, 2007). A postmodernist contention is that representation is not only an act of (re)presentation but also invention, with unpredictable options that emerge when in progress. For these reasons, "production logs", "portfolios", or "creative journals" are recent valid additions as assessment methods (Dallow, 2003; Gordon, 2004). However many curricula have maintained the sole focus of summative assessments on product through "assessment by exhibition" (Cowdroy & de Graaff, 2005) despite the number of studies within the creative domains which indicate that summative assessments often undermine the creative process because of their emphasis on product (Dineen et al., 2005).

In light of these different constructions, articulating favourable conditions for the creative process is no easy task. Whilst studies have found that student creativity is fostered by an emphasis on "process" rather than "product" (Jackson, 1995; Knight, 2001), these are often substantiated by psychological arguments which see creative processes as mechanistic rather than reflexive. Instead, I would argue that it is important to situate the artmaking process as one aspect of the creativity triad, which for educational purposes should not be separated or elevated above the creative person nor the creative artwork but rather situated in relation to them.

The Artwork

My definition of the artwork as a creative outcome is informed by domain-specific notions that it is neither autonomous nor can it be defined by universal criteria but rather, as a social

product, it should be judged by an interpretative community of experts (Elkins 2001; Orr 2007; Shay 2005).

Rather than seeing the artwork as the end-product of the learning process, an approach to encourage creativity in all three aspects of the triad includes critical evaluation by the student. Supported by feedback of those interpreting and assessing their artwork, this allows the student to re-evaluate the work in light of interpretations by readers. This adds a further layer of complex problem initiation which Spendlove (2007) argues is an important part of creativity, in that responsibility is placed on the artist-student to be aware of the impact of their artworks. I believe this ties in productively with the postcolonial argument that the artist has ethical responsibility in his/her authorship. What this requires of educators is to create the appropriate learning contexts to develop students' critical faculties to read their own work and know the value of eliciting the interpretations of others, so as to utilise readers' responses when evaluating and if necessary re-working their artwork.

However, the emphasis on "product" in fine art curricula, with the still dominant summative method of assessment-by-exhibition where students are graded either solely or mostly on the artefact displayed, may be counter-productive in terms of creativity (Belluigi, 2010; Spendlove, 2007). Such an emphasis bypasses the creative person and process with the result that the artwork can easily become part of a system of exchange. Marx's four perspectives on alienation indicate that students may be encouraged to adopt strategic approaches to learning when there is alienation from the product of one's labour, from the process of production, from oneself as a species-being or from other human beings (Mann, 2001, pp. 13–14). The implications of this is that such conditions militate against experimentation, play and risk (Davies, 1997), in addition to limiting contextualised learning, meaning making and emotional engagement (Spendlove, 2007).

Whilst this triad represents the aspects of creativity in relation to each other, I believe that for the purposes of studying the conditions that enable or constrain creativity in fine art studio practice, that the triad be contextualised within the larger concerns of the environment and relationships in which it is situated. The schema I present is underpinned by the notion that there needs to be holistic articulation between agentic, cultural and structural aspects for the conditions for creativity to be successfully created.

Part II. The Environment

The use of the word "environment" alludes to the atmosphere, climate, ethos and spaces created *for* and *by* contexts of learning, which may help or hinder creativity. Recognising that environments create the emotional tenor of the learning experience, Mann (2001, pp. 17–18) offers four principles to alleviate experiences of alienation and increase student engagement.

The first is the teacher's solidarity with the student, characterised by empathy, open dialogue and his/her self-reflections to act as a bridge to the experiences of his/her course participants. The second principle is hospitality, which has to do with providing a sense of shelter, protection or nurturing for the student as s/he transitions from stranger to a new member of the community. The third is safety, where an accepting and respectful climate allows for unstructured non-typical discussions by participants as they come to voice. The last principle proposes a distribution of power, to allow students some measure of control over their learning processes.

Ideally, environments should make the person feel psychologically and physically comfortable to explore uncertain, ambiguous avenues in their learning. As indicated in the schema, this requires a supportive, dynamic and receptive environment which encourages teaching and learning interactions. As I discuss in this section, this necessitates a reflexive balance between action and reflection; between play or risk-taking, and critical evaluation and problematising; between self-directed or autonomous learning and stimulating staff and peer interaction.

Curricula

Teaching styles, methods and strategies, including project types, outcomes, and the assessments and rewards attached to these, are seen to impact profoundly on creativity (Dineen et al., 2005), as are tasks and learning contexts that are challenging, combined with appropriate and supportive feedback (Blair, 2007; Lucas, 2001). Establishing creative contexts, with tasks that are heuristic rather than algorithmic, allows the student to draw from existing knowledge, experience, research and intuition, and exposes him/her to productive experiences of uncertainty as s/he navigates uncharted terrain. Whilst this does not necessarily preclude students productively accessing algorithmic structures they have developed from similar heuristic tasks, those algorithmic strategies imposed by others may have a negative impact (Dineen & Collins, 2005). Of value are real-world problems or tasks that allow for radically asimilar ways of coming to a certain goal or that allow for divergent solutions of conclusions (Marvszewski, 1995). The nature of the task, problem or question should create a context in which to develop the students' abilities not to solve problems through coming to solutions, but rather to problematize by "discover[ing] a problem" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990b, p. 193), through strong acts of creativity (Freeman, 2006).

Educational literature specifically suggests that creativity is promoted by conditions and activities which encourage playfulness, risk-taking and experimentation (Dineen et al., 2005). When occurring during the process of artmaking, experimentation and play draw on the student's whole personality, processes through which they gain a sense of "self" (Winnicott, 1971). The elements of "play" which lead to improvement in creative thinking have been

identified as risk, novelty and curiosity (The Five Colleges of Ohio, 2007). Thinking in ways which feel novel to the student involves psychological risk, as it involves ambiguity, non-linear explorations and the possibility of failure (Ochsner, 2000). When I write of “risk” here it is not in the same vein as those who have been critiqued for giving risk-taking a singular emphasis that does not consider the background and sociocultural conditions that may enable or constrain students to take independent and autonomous risks in their learning. Whilst risk-taking may seem to be improvisational in nature, it is structured by knowledge from the particular domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), as well as previously learnt and regulated thinking, as a corollary of risk assessment (Cunliffe, 2007). Risk, play and divergent thinking may occur intermittently throughout the process, particularly at the beginning, while the latter stages necessitate more exercising of critical judgment (Freeman, 2006). This is only possible in environments which establish trusting relationships (Hardy, 2006; Winnicott, 1971) that is supported through curricula and assessment structures. The one-on-one formative critique method of assessment in particular may have the potential to act as “a terrain where development of creative ideas and sensitive transformation of identity can take place” in the Winnicottian sense of enabling risk-taking and co-construction of identity and ideas (Sagan, 2008, p. 182).

However, whilst ambiguity and uncertainty may be effective prerequisites for creativity, they are rarely tolerated within the determinist, linear trajectory of predictable outcomes (Danvers, 2003) nor within target-driven cultures (Dineen & Collins, 2005), such as those which emerge around summative assessments in higher education. It is questionable whether play and risk can be supported in fine art studio practice curricula where the artwork rather than the learning process remains the primary criterion of success (Davies, 1997) and where “creative ability... [is] at best inferred, but is not assessed” (Cowdroy & de Graaff, 2005, pp. 510–511). Of most concern is a body of research that has shown that creativity can be adversely affected by assessment. A number of studies have revealed what many have long suspected: students often experience the summative assessment as traumatic and in some cases detrimental to their learning. The common sentiment that “critique” feedback should not be taken personally (Elkins, 2001), operates at the level of reproducing the status quo without regard for the affective impact of such events (Webster, 2006). Assessment can decrease creativity if it creates experiences of alienation, such as if the timing is insensitive (Dineen et al., 2005), the primary goal is an externally-imposed grade or mark (Amabile, 1996), feedback is perceived as irrelevant (Blair, 2007) or assessment too harsh (Mann, 2001), promoting surface or strategic approaches, compliance or reproduction rather than questioning or production.

Thus, a curriculum structure that fully integrates assessment is required to prevent the avoidance of risk-taking or being inappropriately risk-insensitive (Cunliffe, 2007), in addition to play or boundary-pushing from becoming indulgent outpouring (Corner, 2005). Towards

this, in previous research I emphasized particular areas of teaching and learning interactions to do with assessment, which impact on the conditions for creativity (Belluigi, 2010), including assessment practices cognisant of the complexities of the creative process to allow for conceptions of risk and failure which enable productive rather than reproductive thinking; negotiated criteria to increase students' intrinsic motivation and autonomy; and formative feedback informed by a valuing of both process and product, which is made relevant in reference to the negotiated criteria.

Relationships

Conditions are not just about the environment, but also relationships which are often constrained or enabled by cultures and structures larger than the agents involved, such as curricula and assessment practices discussed above, and the discursive positioning of teaching and learning roles (Addison, 2007; Gooding-Brown, 2000; Belluigi, forthcoming). However, the biggest single influence on the studio environment is arguably the teacher-student relationship (Dineen & Collins, 2005).

A number of the principles for good practice in higher education are applicable here (Chickering & Gamson, 1987), such as curricula which encourage contact time between students and faculty, in addition to developing cooperation among students themselves. Creativity is more conducive in non-hierarchical contexts which have an allowance of difference, student ownership and personal development (Siegel & Kaemmerer, 1978). An ethos of independence, where opportunities are provided for students to take responsibility for their learning (Anderson et al., 1970; Dineen & Collins, 2005) and to gain self-esteem and confidence in their artmaking (Barone, 2001), reinforces positive feelings of achievement through individual attention (Richardson, 1988). As autonomous learning or "metalearning" (Nickerson, Perkins, & Smith, 1985) is now understood as one of the central determinants of student creativity (Freeman, 2006; N. Jackson, 2005), a shift is necessitated in the teacher's role away from the authoritarian "master" of the guild tradition to more balanced power relationships as facilitator or guide. A favourable condition for creativity is the supervisor-assessor acting as a "critical friend" (Belluigi, 2010) to the artist-student, so as to create student-learning centered environments that value and support divergence and diversity (Dineen et al., 2005).

As mentioned, a component central to creating an emotional climate of safety, is the role trust (Jeffery & Woods, 2003) plays in enabling personal confidence and security. The supervisor's emotional investment in the student, his/her learning process and his/her work is important, as is the nurturing of the student's emotional capacity and behaviour (Spendlove, 2007). Relationships characterised by mutual respect create possibilities for meaningful two-way (Barone, 2001) or collaborative (Jackson, 2005) learning, and allow for active

engagement in the interaction between supervisor, student and artmaking (Dineen & Collins, 2005) – an environment of “shared play”. As Ochsner (2000) points out, “shared play” underpins both Winnicott’s (1971) notion of learning to engage in creative play, and Schön’s (1983) notion of reflection in action. It is partly dependent on the supervisor’s abilities to create such an environment, which will enable the telling, listening, demonstrating and imitating of reflection in action. For creative learning rather than indoctrination to occur, it is important that play has a spontaneous rather than complaint nature, and therefore the supervisor should take care not to overtly intervene in the student’s play (Ochsner, 2000), because of the precarious nature of play which “is always on the theoretical line between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived” (Winnicott, 1971, p. 50). Moreover, how studio supervisors explore, resist or adopt the positioning of their roles would need to be explored consciously for establishing a conducive creative climate. The challenge for such teachers is not to unconsciously slip into practicing or replicating certain traditions, without carefully considering the relation to the conceptions of creativity they embody (Belluigi, 2010), and to take more responsibility for their role in the emotionality of space in the studio learning and assessment environment.

Contemporary Fine Art Practice, Creativity and Criticality

As indicated in the first part of this text, whilst many of those who have attempted to theorise or define creativity have created hierarchies between person, process and product, it is important to remember that most contemporary conceptions of artmaking conceive of the relationships between form and content as reflexive and reciprocal (McEvelley, 1996), where “the development of meanings and interpretations is inseparable from material processes and production” (Danvers, 2003, p. 52). As the activity of artmaking is at the centre of the knowledge generated or employed, practice can be seen to both directly shape the contemporary field and supplement theory (Wild, 1998), allowing the artist, much like the theoretician, to pose questions not only about but through the work. Thus the capacity to exercise critical judgment has become central to notions of the contemporary artist.

Along with the capacity to be speculative and critically reflective, is a recent recognition of the personal capacity to work with emotions. The ability to not simply handle but anticipate and engage with uncertainty (Eisner, 1998, 2003, 2004), creative tension and emotional discomfort (Runco, 1994), can be developed in artistic practice. Both supervisors and students should be responsive and receptive to this emotionality without being carried away by it (Freeman, 2006). Critical thinking and reflexivity (Belluigi, 2009) play a part in preventing tacit acceptance elitist or reductive myths of creativity that position the artist-genius as more emotionally sensitive (Massey, 2006) than non-artists. As creativity involves aspects of both convergent and divergent thinking, dynamic and complex intersections and slippages are possible between criticality and creativity, cognitive and affective learning. In a bid to ensure

validity, curricula may place more value on the reflexivity between the two concepts of creativity and criticality (Belluigi, 2009). Supervisors' modeling and fostering an "interrogative disposition" is congruous with the expectation that students challenge and fundamentally question given assumptions and dogmas (Danvers, 2003). Such linking of creativity with processes of reflexivity or evaluation should also serve encouraging students to question the political or other ends which their creativity serves (Craft, 2006).

One of the ways in which to do this is to create spaces for students' reflective and critical enquiry, at the various levels including affective (Boler, 1999). The importance of both critical judgment and engagement is clearly indicated in the schema. Important for this discussion, the "will to criticality" (Mann, 2001, p. 18) can be enabled through conditions underpinned by the principles of solidarity, hospitality, safety, and re-distribution of power discussed in this paper. However such ideal principles, in addition to the valuing of substantive criticality, may be thwarted by bureaucratic and utilitarian higher education discourses and structures, and coercive assessment practices (Danvers, 2003)

A Concern for the Affect

As emotions play a conscious and unconscious role in defining what one chooses to make in/visible to oneself (Boler, 1999), I concur with those who argue that the affect should be recognized as integral to the student experience (Austerlitz, 2007; Boler, 1999; Dirkx, 2001; Mann, 2001; Sagan, 2008; Spendlove, 2007) and ways of knowing (Heron, 1992) the relationships between the self and the broader social world through imaginative and extra-rational meaning-making (Chodorow, 1999).

In terms of both the promotion and inhibition of engagement and creativity, a central affective concern is to do with motivation, a complex subject to do with factors both internal and external to the student, the classroom and the subject of study itself. Some see motivation as the innate result of the person's search for meaning and identity (see for instance Illeris, 2004), whilst others have expanded this to suggest that motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic (see for instance Amabile, 1996). Research has indicated that intrinsic motivation increases when there is student ownership, when value is shown for student input, and when opportunities are created in the curriculum for students to pursue their own desires (Dineen & Collins, 2005), which indicates that valuing of student intentionality may be central to their motivation (Belluigi, 2010). Positive emotions (such as joy, satisfaction and challenge) are seen to temporarily broaden a person's mindset to expand the self, push limits and interact with others (Fredrickson, 2001). The positive creative state that is paralleled to intrinsic motivation has been called the experience of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990a, 1996), and in relation to studio learning, a "Sense of Being" (Reid & Solomonides, 2007) or "to rest assured" (Edström, 2008b).

What is generally acknowledged is that inappropriate contexts and barren environments can debilitate learning engagement, with the result of being disempowering and emotionally demotivating for the student (Fredrickson, 2001). One of the key conditions for creative learning is the elimination of negative stress (Lucas, 2001) and experiences of alienation, where the student may become separated from his/her being and desires (Mann, 2001). However, as I outline below, considerations of the affective dimension should include not only the emotional climate or environment in which learning occurs, but also the emotional engagement with *the subject* itself (Spendlove, 2007).

Based on tensions between the rational and the unconscious, psychoanalytic conceptions construct the self as the “defended subject” (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000) who utilizes thought processes and behaviours to ward off unpleasant sensations of anxiety. The effects of this is seen when students feel anxious, due to a lack of confidence or unsupportive relationships and environments, and find their attention and their cognitive capabilities disrupted (Kluger & de Nisi, 1996). However, it should be noted that whilst this is the case with unconscious (French, 1997) or extreme anxiety, some anxiety is necessary for learning (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2002), particularly the disruption of comfort zones within transformative learning (Boler, 1999), and learning which requires the level of commitment necessary for students to take responsibility for their own learning. In fact, some anxiety may be inevitable in subjects such as fine art studio practice which has an inherent instability born from the amount of dynamic and productive critical interrogation, re-working and reconsideration (Danvers, 2003). To accommodate chance, intuition and the emergence of unconscious associations, within the artmaking process, the student may suspend analytical, rationalist thinking in order to play with ideas, materials and techniques. Frustration and uncertainty may occur due to such improvisatory modes of thinking and action; unpredictable and unexpected stimuli and circumstances within the artmaking process; and approaches that do not have pre-determined objectives but allow for the emergence of the work’s content in process (Edström, 2008b). Faced with such challenges, students may find anxiety an integral part of the process where “crucial decisions are made by the individual, which directly affect the outcome of the creative product or concept” (Kneller, 1965, p. 105). Those without relevant capacity or supportive conditions may find such emotional uncertainty overwhelming and flounder (Freeman, 2006). By modelling a tolerance for uncertainty and anxiety, the teacher can develop the student’s capacity for containment (Bion, 1970), for accepting, holding or detoxifying projections of fear, anger and anxiety (French, 1997), and working productively with uncertainty (Lucas, 2001).

Moreover, emotions which are traditionally seen as negative in education, in fine art studio practice may lead to a transcendental state of enlightenment (Reid & Solomonides, 2007, pp. 34–35) not unlike a “high”, increasing the artist-students confidence and self-knowledge.

Those assured within such affective processes experience “access to affect laden thoughts, openness to affect states, affective pleasure in challenge, affective pleasure in problem solving, and cognitive integration of affective material” (Russ, 1999 in Spendlove, 2007, p. 159). In fact, this qualitative change towards a state of confidence and trust in the student’s own abilities and self-directed learning is seen in some fine art curricula as the main outcome of the undergraduate degree (Edström, 2008a).

Conditions may support and develop students’ capacities for self-knowledge to work with uncertainty through an environment of challenging and motivating contexts, practical engagement in the artmaking process and assessment of the artwork itself, interaction with others, and a knowledge base to which students can relate their existing knowledge and their artmaking.

Conclusion

In this paper I have alluded to arguments that suggest a balance may be required between deterministic and volunteerist notions of authorship, subjectivity and creativity to enable the conditions for creativity in fine art studio practice. Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) linking of creativity with the critical capacity to reference knowledge in a particular field has currency, and is echoed by Dallow (2003, p. 60) who writes that “an individual creative “practice” is itself as much a product of the broader social and cultural, generative (transdisciplinary) schemes it emerges from, as it is (in)formed by the field of practice and academic discipline it is dependent upon”. Such critical contextualisation of artmaking as “produced” should not be confused with a mechanistic, regulated logic. Instead creative practice is to some extent also the idiosyncratic product and outcome of the individual’s conditional and subjective lived experience: “it is part of the aggregate of being in the provisional world of meaning, as much as in the unstable material world” (Dallow, 2003, p. 60).

A visual representation, such as the one I have sketched in Figure 1, may be problematic in that it essentialises different aspects of this rather nuanced area, and may make them seen atomistic, distinct and static. However, the schema I propose should not be reduced to the creative triad in isolation nor seen as autonomous of the environment in which it is situated. Rather the focus should be on the complex and fluid interplay between (and within) them. My intention has thus not been to create a schema that once again dichotomises self/ other, internal/ external, teaching/learning, but rather looks at the particularities and peculiarities of such interrelations and negotiations. This is in an attempt to situate the complexities of the interactions between the artist-student, his/her process and artwork within the context of the studio environment, curriculum and relationships, and contemporary art, while making allowance for the integrity and careful consideration of each aspect.

So whilst in this paper I have been careful to substantiate what I believe to be a productive sketch of the conditions for creativity in fine art studio practice, underpinning this has been an ethical concern to shift the emphasis from discrimination to *discernment* (Derrida, 1992, p. 55) or from an internally reflexive position of justifying the certitude of my own claims to trying to find ways to *comprehend* how learning is negotiated in studio practice, and the effects of this on the conditions for creativity. For this reason, the paper attempts to articulate and negotiate the complex nuances of the structural interplay in addition to the cultural and agential dynamics of curricula and assessment; the roles and relationships of tutor, assessor and student; and how these can be brought productively to bear on the artist-student as a person, his/her artmaking process and artwork.

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